

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Making It Work

Department of Education

A Student's Story

Believe!

In describing himself, Nick Cordova says, "I think I am just one of those people, a fighter. I push me forward. There were months at a time, where the stress of college or school left me so very out of it. There were times where I could not walk in a straight line because of the confusion. Days when the pure act of waking up in the morning was like fighting the full force of Niagara Falls. But, I got up. I moved on. I pushed forward."

In meeting Nick, most would not know of the battles he has fought. Nick has a disability that isn't immediately seen by others. His mother, Cindy Cordova, notes that "Most people would not pick up on it at all and might misread what they do pick up as arrogance or rudeness." Little do they know of the multiple issues he faces. Nick has insulin resistant diabetes, hypopituitarism, anxiety disorder, migraines as a result of a pituitary tumor that was removed, and a specific learning disability in written expression. The hypopituitarism makes him tired, confused and nauseated. The symptoms tend to be the worst in times of high stress.

Given all of this, one may be surprised to hear all that Nick has achieved. Nick knew that he wanted to work with computers and had always known that he wanted to go college. His mother,

Continued on page 3

Focus on Employment:

Employers Speak

Who knows better than employers what it takes to be successful on the job? Representatives from Nebraska employers have shared their suggestions for success to be passed along to you. Check out the advice this employer has for students as they begin interviewing for jobs.

1. **Have a resume or something to show your experiences.** It shows you have attention for details and pride in what you've done.
2. **Dress appropriately for the interview.** I have never interviewed an over-dressed candidate.
3. **Be positive.** You should never speak badly of previous jobs or employers.
4. **Mock interviews help calm nerves.** Walk through a few questions in front of a mirror the night before an interview.
5. **Send a thank you e-mail or note the same day as the interview.**

This excellent advice was provided by:
Jim Stultz, Senior Recruiter infoUSA

infoUSA

Nick Cordova

In This Issue:

A Student's Story Believe!.....	1
Focus on Employment Employer's Speak.....	1
Partners in Planning: Voc Rehab and Employment.....	2
About This Publication.....	4
Additional Resources.....	4



Voc Rehab & Employment

What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) is an employment program for people with disabilities. Voc Rehab helps individuals make career plans, learn job skills, and get and keep a job. The goal is simple: prepare people for jobs where they can make a living wage and have access to medical insurance.

What is Voc Rehab's role with high school students?

Voc Rehab, in partnership with schools across Nebraska, works with students with disabilities to prepare for life after graduation. The Voc Rehab Transition Program assists students with transition planning by helping identify appropriate goals and needed supports.

Students may be referred for the Transition Program at age 14. Services under the program are primarily provided in groups to explore the world of work and to assist in development of job readiness skills. Under this program, Voc Rehab staff may:

- Provide outreach materials and information to students and parents regarding the transition process and Voc Rehab;
- Help guide students toward appropriate employment goals;
- Consult with educators on individual students; and/or
- Collaborate with schools to provide group vocational services, such as employer tours.

What is Voc Rehab's Employment Program?

Many students will require vocational services during their last year of high school and beyond. These students may be served in Voc Rehab's Employment Program. After determining that the student is eligible, Voc Rehab staff work with the students, parents, and educators to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Note that the IPE is different from a plan with a similar sounding name, the IEP (Individual Education Plan), that is developed by the school. However, the transition plan that is developed as part of the IEP should provide the foundation for the development of the IPE for Voc Rehab services.

Examples of services that may be provided under the Employment Program include: vocational evaluations, career counseling, benefits analysis, college tours and planning for college, on-the-job training and evaluations, training in job seeking skills, or job placement assistance.

Students who are eligible for the Employment Program typically enter this program during the second semester of their junior year or senior year. They can continue through 90 days of successful employment after finishing high school. Depending on their individual needs, the student may be in the Employment Program for months or years, as would be the case with a student who is receiving post-secondary education.

Who is eligible?

Students with a disability who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan and who are capable of future employment in the community may be determined eligible to participate in Voc Rehab services. Voc Rehab also serves adults and those who leave school before graduation. Students wishing to

receive services who are blind or visually impaired may apply to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

How are students referred?

Students may be referred to Voc Rehab by educators, guidance counselors, school nurses, administrators, or parents. There is not a formal application for students referred to the Transition Program, although parents will need to sign a consent form.

What is the role of parents?

It is important to emphasize that the involvement of parents and support throughout the entire transition process has a significant impact on the student's future success. Through regular communication with their son or daughter, the school, and Voc Rehab staff, parents can be informed and active participants in planning for the future.

Need more information?

Visit the "Frequently Asked Questions About Transition" webpage for more information: <http://www.vr.ne.gov/transition/index.html>.

You may contact Vocational Rehabilitation in Lincoln at: 402-471-3644 or call toll free at 877-637-3422. You may find information about the Voc Rehab Service Office in your area by calling these numbers, or on the web at: <http://www.vr.ne.gov/offices/index.html>.

**Voc Rehab
helps
individuals
make career
plans, learn
job skills, and
get and
keep a job.**

Believe! ... continued

Cindy, recalls that there were times when she felt that some of his teachers focused on what he couldn't do instead of what he could do. When talking about college, others would only tell him to keep his expectations realistic, rather than focusing on finding a way to make it happen. That didn't stop Nick!

During his junior year at Lincoln Northeast High School, Nick began working with Paige Rose, Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) Specialist. Cindy says that Paige was always supportive of him continuing his education and helped out without making him dependent on her or the system to get his needs met. Paige assisted with the college testing and application process and linked him with the student disability office to arrange for accommodations for college classes. Voc Rehab also assisted with tuition for college and a Driver's Training Class.

Nick was prepared so that, after graduating from high school in 2006, he was ready to enroll at Southeast Community College (SCC) Lincoln. While there, he was allowed to tape and receive copies of lectures and given extra

time on tests and written assignments to accommodate his disability. In addition, he uses a software program for speech recognition to assist with spelling errors and text-to-speech software that helps with grammar. All of this paid off when he received an Associate of Applied Science degree in Microcomputer Technology in September of 2008.

Within a few months of graduating from SCC, Nick landed a job at Cabela's in the Fraud Analysis Division. His responsibilities include monitoring credit card accounts online for possible fraudulent activity. As Nick describes it, "I call people when someone is trying to use their card. The day to day can be anything from talking to a guy that was jumped, but now his card is being used up and down a Tennessee highway, to double checking on large charges at Best Buy." When asked if he plans to stay in the position, he says, "It is interesting work and for now, it is working for me."

Paige points out that the amazing part of Nick's story is that he never had a job or work experiences prior to landing his job at Cabela's. After SCC, he took a Job Seeking Skills class and a data

entry/typing test through Voc Rehab. They also reviewed his resume, provided job leads, and assisted in obtaining interview clothing. Nick says Voc Rehab was, "generally just someone that I know had my back if I had questions." This support and preparation served him well when, not long after graduation, he followed a suggestion from one of his mother's friends and landed his job.

Paige notes that he has blossomed immensely and now is working, earning benefits, talking about moving out, driving, and making friends. While Nick still lives at home, his mother says that he can cook, clean, and manage his own money. Nick plans to move out next January when his student loans will be paid off and he has a good rainy day fund established.

Still, all is not easy for Nick and his family. Cindy points out that any kind of conflict triggers his anxiety and that he will often ignore a problem rather than deal with it verbally. This can be very frustrating for family members.

Continued on page 4

Nick says Voc Rehab was, "generally just someone that I know had my back if I had questions."



CONNECTIONS: A LOOK AT RESOURCES

Your Subscription to "Making it Work"

It's hard for us to believe, but the first issue of "Making It Work" was published seven years ago in September 2002. During this time, we have been working hard to ensure that this publication reaches people who are interested in transition planning for students with disabilities. In order to do this and keep our information current, we want to hear from you.

Please notify us if you:

- Received a copy of this from someone else and would like to have your own subscription.
- Wish to receive this publication via e-mail.
- Wish to be removed from the mailing list.

Contact Sandy Ham at Vocational Rehabilitation with your request by e-mail atsandy.ham@nebraska.gov or by calling her toll free at 1-877-637-3422 (in Lincoln at 471-0941).

A Student's Story ... continued

She says that usually he can take some time to himself, exercise, etc. and come back to it later. It also works for him to e-mail his mother with specific issues that he does not want to discuss verbally.

Nick's accomplishments have been the result of a team effort. First and foremost is Nick's drive and motivation. On top of that, Paige says, "He has the most amazing, supportive parents anyone could imagine."

The respect is mutual. His mother says that, "The best thing that ever happened to him was to have a worker (Paige) assigned who didn't engage in the power struggles with him and let him do it his way, even when both she and I weren't sure it would work. Often it did! She also didn't enable him in any way. If she asked for information or follow through, she expected that he do it. She believed in him."

Believe in him. That seems to be the key. Cindy goes on to say that parents have to listen to their child. If she had gone along with the people telling her that Nick couldn't go to college, it would have been a huge mistake for him.

Although she says she has a tendency to want to rescue him, she needs to remember that this is his life now and he has a good handle on how to deal with it.

Of course, Cindy says she will always be there if Nick needs something. But, she continually reminds herself that he is a 20 year old man and not a 15 year old child anymore. Finally, she offers this advice for parents: "Ask questions

when you don't understand what is happening with your child. If your gut says it is wrong, then ask someone else. Doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, etc. do not have all of the right answers all of the time. They are human too. Tell them what you want, need and expect for your child and, if they can't provide it, then work to find it elsewhere." Most importantly, don't forget to believe in your child!

For More Information:

Contact the State Vocational Rehabilitation Office in Lincoln at 1-402-471-3644 or toll free at 1-877-637-3422.

You may obtain information on the Voc Rehab Service Office in your area by calling these numbers or accessing the Service Office listing on the web at: <http://www.vr.ne.gov/offices/index.html>

About this Publication

This publication, produced by Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, is intended for students with disabilities and their families. The next issue, Volume #32, is scheduled for distribution in the winter of 2009.

Please contact us if you:

- Would like additional copies of this publication.
- Have questions or would like more details about any of the information contained in this issue.
- Have a success story you'd like to share with us.
- Have suggestions for topics for future issues.
- Wish to be removed from the mailing list for this publication.

To view previous issues of this or other Vocational Rehabilitation publications, or to receive a free subscription to these publications, go to: <http://www.vr.ne.gov:4000/subscribe>. You may also contact the Vocational Rehabilitation State Office toll free at 1-877-NE-REHAB (1-877-637-3422) to receive these publications.

Additional Resources

If you have questions or concerns about services from Vocational Rehabilitation or are looking for additional disability resources, contact the Hotline for Disability Services/Client Assistance Program at 1-800-742-7594 or in Lincoln at 402-471-0801 or e-mail Victoria at: victoria.rasmussen@nebraska.gov.

